

The Study of Political Economy.

BY A FARMER.

My first article on the study of Political Economy having been criticized at some length in the June number of the Merchants' Magazine, and evidently misunderstood, I will endeavor in this to explain what may appear obscure, and place the science of agricultural production on its true basis. The theory of Mr. Malthus, which was substantially adopted by Ricardo and McCulloch, is that population naturally increases, from year to year, while tillage for the production of human food and raiment tends to diminish the natural fruitfulness of the earth; and that the necessary effect of these apparently conflicting laws is to restrain the multiplication of the human family within certain limits, not well defined. On the other hand, the theory of Messrs. Carey, Bastiat and others is that food tends to increase faster than population, creating a surplus, which encourages the withdrawal of labor from agriculture to be employed in mechanical and manufacturing pursuits. Having studied this subject with some care, the undersigned ventures to express the opinion that both of the above named theories are erroneous, and that the truth in this case, as in many others, lies between the extremes of contending parties. Although "R. S." fancies that he can detect "inconsistencies" in my statements about the chemical and mechanical results of good and bad husbandry, yet no such inconsistencies exist.

Let us first inquire, what is production in an agricultural sense? More than two-thirds of the labor and capital of the Union are employed in tillage and husbandry; but with what results in the way of producing and consuming national wealth?

There are not far from five millions of farm laborers in the United States, and they have in pastures, meadows and cultivation, probably not less than 120,000,000 acres. Can that labor be regarded as truly productive, whose proceeds are insufficient to cover the damage done to the soil while the labor is expended? A man who merely loses his labor and the capital which he produced by former more successful industry, can hardly be said to injure materially any one but himself. This is often done in disastrous commercial and mechanical operations; the capital invested is sunk, and the labor performed is lost. But as operations of this character really are, they are much less injurious to the community than a good deal of agricultural industry, which most political economists consider peculiarly productive. Mr. Malthus says: "It has been justly observed by Adam Smith, that no equal quantity of productive labor, employed in manufactures, can ever occasion so great a re-production as in agriculture." Commenting on the above, Mr. Ricardo remarks: "If Adam Smith speaks of value, he is correct, but if he speaks of riches, which is the material point, he is mistaken, for he has himself defined riches to consist of the necessities, conveniences, and enjoyments of human life."

A common error prevails in the mind of each of the above named authors, in regard to the productiveness of rural industry. Not one of them takes cognizance of the fact that valuable raw material is consumed as much in making a bushel of grain, as in making a yard of cloth. "R. S." has fallen into the same error, and hence fails to comprehend how tillage alone, without cropping, exhausts land, while skillful husbandry will not only maintain the virgin fertility of the earth, but render it still more productive. I insist on the point that no writer on Political Economy, of any note, whether he supports Free Trade or Protection, has attempted to show the difference between destructive and productive farm-labor. No one who is familiar with American agriculture in any State east of the Mississippi, will deny that the impoverishment of the soil is the rule, and its improvement in fertility, above its natural fruitfulness, the exception, among American cultivators. Following the common estimate of the value of crops, and the gain in domestic animals and their products, let us assume the aggregate product to be \$800,000,000 in the current year, 1851; and that the agriculturists, as a class, consume \$600,000,000 of the fruits of their industry. This leaves a surplus of wealth, created in twelve months by them of \$200,000,000. The important question now arises, how much will it cost to renovate so much of the soil as has been damaged in any way by the loss of fertility in grass and hay, in grain, roots, tubers, flax, hemp, tobacco, sugar-cane, rice, cotton, fruits of all kinds, and in all other field and garden crops, removed from the ground that produced them? Admit that only half of the improved lands in the Union have lost by tillage, the leaching and washing of rains, by the certain consumption of vegetable mold, and the volatilization of manure in a hundred forms, the equivalent of one good harvest. Now, what is the sum, in money or labor, that will replace in the soil the equivalent, in manure, of sixty millions acres of grain, cotton, and tobacco, so far as the atmosphere and rains fail to supply the elements of crops?

It may be impossible to give a clear and satisfactory answer to this question, without also giving a brief account of the things in the soil, consumed, partly to form the substance of cultivated plants, and partly to furnish that considerable amount of the organic and inorganic food of crops, which rain-water always leaches out, and removes from arid earth. Did "R. S." ever turn over a large compost heap six times in the course of the summer? If so, he must have noticed that the mass "grew smaller by degrees, and beautifully less." The stirring of the soil with the implements of tillage consumes vegetable mold, irrespective of all crops, in a similar manner, and it also dissolves out of the loose ground, salts of lime, magnesia, potash, and soda, without which plants cannot grow. What political economist has duly considered the fact that Nature never plows, nor harrows, nor hoes, nor cultivates the earth, in any way, to produce her largest and most luxuriant vegetables? Of all the animals on earth, man alone tills it, and ignorantly impairs its natural fertility. "R. S." calls attention to the care with which manure is saved and applied in Great Britain and on the Continent. I hope to be pardoned for intimating that I am tolerably well posted up in the progress of European agriculture, reading regularly the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, and of the Scotch Highland and Agricultural Society, of London Farmers' Magazine, Agricultural Gazette, and Gardener's Chronicle, and to name French periodicals devoted to rural affairs.

If the farmers of England restore to the soil all the elements of crops extracted from it, and still find it necessary to import 116,000 tons of guano a year, and an immense quantity of flax-seed and oil-cake, indirectly for manure, (the growing neither cotton, tobacco, nor maize, (our most exhausting crops,) from what sources, and at what cost, shall we obtain the raw material to renovate, for a single harvest, only six million acres of our impoverished land? Will "R. S."

answer this plain question? Our experience in using 14,000 tons of guano a year, proves that to obtain a single fair crop, from 200 to 3000 pounds per acre must be applied; and this imported manure is now selling in Augusta, Georgia, at four dollars per 100 lbs. By the time the cotton planters get it to their plantations, it will cost them a dollar more. Now, 200 lbs. of this manure, costing \$10, will not supply to an acre of land, by a long way, all the potash needed to form a fair crop of cotton, of corn, wheat, or other grain. But assume that it will meet every demand of nature in organizing one crop, which must weigh at least 3,000 lbs., and if corn, more than twice that amount, the expense is six hundred millions of dollars for sixty millions of acres. It will not do to estimate the value of manure imported from Peru, or elsewhere, at its price in sea port; but it must be placed at its cost where consumed. Will it be contended that the uniform experience of ages, in all countries, indicating the necessity of applying manure, is all a mistake, and that we can go on for ever growing and exporting cotton, tobacco, and breadstuffs, without consuming the few well known substances in and near the surface of the earth, which form cultivated plants? If so, no argument can avail against such an absurdity.

Whatever may be the precise value, either present or prospective, of the natural fruitfulness of American soil, one thing is perfectly clear to my mind, which is, that if we subtract all that the whole population of this country annually consume from what they produce, the "riches" left will not pay twenty-five cents a day for the labor that must be expended to make the soil as good as we found it, from year to year. In other words, the wealth of the present generation is not fairly produced, by proving the raw material consumed, or by keeping the stock in the surface of the earth good, by wise tillage and skillful husbandry; but it is created by the wasteful loss and reckless consumption of the most precious atoms which alone can form human clothing, brains, muscles, and bones. One-third of the earthy matter in a bushel of wheat is pure potash, and full one-half of that in a perfect potatoe plant, including tubers, roots, stems, and leaves, is the same alkali. Will any reader say that the constant exportation of pot and pearlashes from this continent, for two centuries, drawn from its forest trees and soil, and the constant waste of all that has been consumed in soap, in cotton and tobacco, and in a thousand other forms, has not diminished the supply in the improved lands of the United States? I assert, after the patient research of years, that the quantity of this alkali annually thrown away in privies and elsewhere, in this country, is equal to the production of 500,000,000 bushels of wheat, and yet no man has seen a blade of grass, or grain, a potatoe, cotton, or tobacco plant, which did not contain potash as one of its natural elements. Ammonia is worth to-day eleven cents a pound in England, for agricultural purposes, notwithstanding all the organized elements of this alkali, in the 80,000,000 bushels of grain, flour, or meal annually imported, and all that is contained in the guano, oil-cake, seeds and provisions also imported, and all that is contained in every vegetable and animal product of British soil. Have I not said enough to show that the science of agricultural production is little understood; and that Political Economy is less comprehended by economists themselves, so far as national consumption and production are concerned? These learned men see very clearly how grain can be accumulated in granaries, and gold in money-bags, but when it comes to the accumulation of the element of crops in the surface of the earth for the economical production of the great staples of a nation, their wisdom is at fault, and nothing can be seen but the grossest inconsistencies. This arises from their neglect to study the causes of fruitfulness and barrenness in arated earth. With them the difference between good and bad husbandry, is no more than that between two-dee and two-dee dum. Having filled their mind with conflicting theories about exchanges—high tariffs, low tariffs, and free trade—there is, unfortunately, no room left for anything else pertaining to political economy. I would say nothing in disparagement of the science of exchanges, between persons of the same nation, or of different nations, provided it did not, like Aaron's rod, swallow up all other kindred studies, which are of much greater consequence. If man cannot create the elements of human food and clothing, and these elements do not exist in the soil in inexhaustible quantities, it is not plain that to maintain the natural fertility of land is one of the highest duties which each generation owes to all surrounding ones? In fifty years the United States will contain one hundred millions of inhabitants to be all clothed and fed; and in view of this fact, what mortal right have the twenty-three or four millions now here, to leave the earth less fertile than they found it? Is there no force in the Roman maxim, "*Salus populi Suprema Lex*"? In what does the "safety of the people," or republic consist? Not, surely, in desolating a million fields with the plow, instead of the sword? Professor Wray, consulting chemist to the English Royal Agricultural Society, estimates the daily waste of fertilizing matter washed into the Thames, in the city of London, as worth \$2,000, or \$10,000. Here is a loss in a single city of a million of dollars every one hundred days. "R. S." intimates that Adam Smith brought the study of political economy so near perfection seventy-five years ago, that there is very little more to be learned or said on the subject. In my humble opinion, the A. B. C.'s of the science have yet to be investigated by the professors of this department of human knowledge. To assume that cities and nations can prosper without any reference to the soil, is, obviously, the extreme of folly. Doubtless, Babylon and Palmyra acted on this principle; but where now is all their greatness? Precisely where that of London and New York will end under the guidance of their present false system of political economy.

Thus far I have given a simple detail of facts. Now, how shall we account for them? I know it is argued by many, and they think they have nature on their side, that every seed must and will reproduce its own kind and nothing else. I grant that this, in the main, is true; but it is equally true, that nature, disturbed in its proper functions, will often produce monsters both in the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Why does rye produce ergot, or corn a black, ill-shaped fungus? Neither of them are the natural and proper products of rye or corn. And why may not wheat, when disturbed in its natural and proper course of vegetation, produce something as different from its original, as ergot from rye, or fungus from corn?

The only satisfactory conclusion that I can arrive at in relation to my wheat, is this: that the general abundance of chess throughout the whole field was produced by the wheat sheelled on the ground from the former year's crop, which sprung up after the ground was ploughed, and was torn to pieces by the subsequent dragging. That the great abundance of chess found where the pigeons had worked; was the result of the injuries done by them to the crop sown, together with the general cause just mentioned. The spots where the snow had lain producing entire chess, mingling and gradually shading into wheat at the edges, was the result of injuries done by the snow. But the advocates of the doctrine that "like produces like" will doubtless fly to their old refuge, and argue that chess being a harder plant than wheat, and the wheat being partially or wholly destroyed, the chess occupied its place and grew in greater abundance than if the wheat had not been injured. But I ask, where could it come from? It must either grow from its seed, existing in the ground in sufficient abundance to produce the number of stalks I found, or else the few roots that did exist must have spread and thrown up a great abundance of stalks to supply the vacancy left by the wheat. Now, the truth is, that where the pigeons did their mischief, there was not a great crop of wheat and chess together as on other parts of the field, by about one third; where the snow drifts had lain there was no perceptible difference in the amount of stalks compared with the uninjured parts of the field. Nor was there any perceptible difference in the number of stalks growing from the same root, either of chess or of wheat, especially where the chess was most abundant. Besides this, if all the chess that grew on that field that year, was the product of chess sown, some one else besides myself must have sown it. Neither, if all the chess that grew on the field that year, had been sheelled off on the field would it have been enough to have produced so great a crop. Again, if chess seed was the origin of the chess that grew, how did it happen that just as far and exactly where injuries had been done to the wheat, the chess was found to correspond exactly in amount and extent, with the amount, extent, and nature of the injury done? M. H. James county, Michigan, 1851.

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which I have so long and so liberally drawn for the paltry consideration of one dollar a year.—The question

WELL WHEAT TURN TO CHIEF? Has been pretty liberally discussed in your columns. I am not prepared to say that it will or will not, but will state my experience and leave those who may read it to draw their own conclusions.

In 1838 I commenced to make a farm upon entirely new land, in the wilderness in Ionia county Michigan. I prepared a field of six acres upon which no crop had ever before been raised. My seed-wheat contained very little chess or cheat, and not having conveniences for separating it, I sowed it as it was. The soil was a sandy loam. I raised a fair crop of wheat, with a sprinkling of chess, at the rate of about one bushel to twenty of wheat. I was delayed in harvesting, so that my wheat shelled in hand, and left perhaps one bushel per acre scattered over the ground. Immediately after harvest I ploughed up the same field and sowed it again to wheat, this time with clean seed; I worked it alone with but one team of oxen. Considerable time was consumed in preparing the ground and getting in the crop. After the ground was ploughed and before dragging commenced, I observed that some of the wheat left by the former crop sprouted and came up, perhaps one-fourth as much as would seed the ground, but this speedily disappeared when the dragging commenced. To avoid as much as possible the mischief of large flocks of pigeons which constantly hovered around me, I used to sow in the morning what I could drag in during the remainder of the day. In this way, that which I sowed first got well started up before I had completed the field. The pigeons took advantage of several large fields standing close to the side of the field first sowed, and which afforded them a convenient look-out, used to assemble there in great numbers and then descend to the field and have jolly times. Owing to the dust they kicked up, my curiosity was excited to find out what they were doing, as I supposed that they never scratched. I succeeded in getting near enough to observe that with almost incredible dexterity they removed the earth with their beaks, seizing and throwing it aside, until they had uncovered the kernel at the root of the plant, which they bit off and devoured; sometimes tearing up the plant, but generally leaving it standing, with a portion of the roots laid bare and the kernel gone. During the following winter, owing to the form of the land, two large and deep snow-drifts were formed by the wind, which remained upon the field nearly three weeks after the snow had left the rest of the field. When these drifts were gone, the wheat, where they lay, appeared entirely killed. One spot covered nearly half an acre, the other not so much. I did not see the field again until about the first of June, when, very much to my surprise, I found the places where the snow-drifts had lain, as well covered with luxuriant grain as any other part of the field, and just ready to push out their heads. After the grain had headed I saw it again, and was again surprised to find that, just so far as I had supposed the wheat killed in the spring by the snow, I now had a beautiful crop of chess, and where the snow had lain heaviest and largest, there was chess and nothing else. I also found that where the pigeons had torn the wheat the most, that chess was more plenty than wheat, and there was generally through the field more than twice the amount of chess I had expected to find.

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MARBLE! MARBLE!! THE firm of Saul & Dean was dissolved on the 12th of October last. The undersigned, who continues the Marble business at the old stand, formerly occupied by Beebe, two doors east of T. R. Selmes' Buildings. He has on hand a good assortment of Italian and American marble, and hopes all those wishing to purchase will call and see for themselves. He will sell cheaper than has ever been sold in the West, and his work cannot help pleasing for cheapness and style. P. A. SAUL.

COME AT LAST! MISS JENNY LIND AT HANNIBAL! THE undersigned would take special pleasure in announcing to the citizens of Hannibal, and the adjoining counties that he has just received his Spring stock of

GROCERIES, and he can safely say without the least fear of contradiction that he has the largest and best selected assortment of Family Groceries ever brought to Hannibal, and is determined to sell as low as can be sold in the city, and warrant him of as good quality as can be found in any establishment in the State of Missouri. So all of you that hunger and thirst after the substantial of life, come unto me and buy meat and drink and good articles and cheap bargains. [nov3] G. W. CAPLINGER.

W. A. MOFFETT, A. J. STILLWELL, G. R. GREEN MOFFETT, STILLWELL & CO., COMMISSION MERCHANTS No. 11, Locust st. (Up Stairs,) ST. LOUIS, MO.

Insurance. E. M. MOFFETT, AGENTS OF THE COLUMBIAN INSURANCE COMPANY, Columbus, Ohio, are prepared to take Fire and Marine risks upon the most favorable terms in this well known and popular office. Hannibal, Sept. 26th, 1850—[nov3] G. W. CAPLINGER.

BRANDY—a very superior article on hand and for sale by [nov24] G. W. CAPLINGER.

J. A. INSLEE & CO., HANNIBAL, Mo. FORWARDING AND Commission Merchants, and Wholesale Dealers in Liquors.

A superior article of Double Rectified Whiskey, of the celebrated "Black Horse Brand" always on hand. Also—Agents for Seitz & Green's Clarified Cider [nov22]

Administratrix's Notice. NOTICE is hereby given to all persons interested in the estate of James Shaloney, deceased, that let of administration upon said estate have been granted to the undersigned by the Clerk of the St. Louis County Court in vacation, bearing date August 14, 1851. All persons indebted to said estate are requested to make payment immediately, and all persons having claims against said estate are requested to present them, properly authenticated, within one year from the date of said letters, and if not presented within three years they will be forever barred.

aug21-31 FANNY SHAHONEY, Adm'x.

Wanted! 1,000 BUSHELS of good STONE COAL, for which we will pay the highest market price in trade. [aug21] QUARLES & CALDWELL.

List of Letters REMAINING in the Post Office at Hannibal, Mo. R. August 13th, 1851:

Bishop Vincent	Huskil Wm
Blaine Jos	Hambrough Mr
Buckland J	Hare Heph
Burnett Geo W	Hudson Agnes
Blesser Mark	Hornback James
Blain Rosannah	Harper Prof J D
Burch Hamilton	Hart Thos J
Bowling Hannah	Hendrick John
Brown Julia D	Hill G W
Brown Mary A	Johns Humphrey
Barber R R	Layman John
Cor Mattha J	Lanham Jessa
Cline John	McIntosh Judge
Cowser Joseph	Miller Isaac
Cooper Joseph J	McNall J A
Chapman J L	Newman Joseph
Carv Dr John C	Neale John
Colburn John	Oristof Joshua
Carver Thorsbury	Ryan James